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Epidemiology of low back pain among nurses working in public hospitals of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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Background: Low back pain (LBP) related to nursing profession, is a very common public health problem throughout the world. Various risk factors have been implicated in the etiology and LBP is assumed to be of multi-factorial origin as individual, work-related and psychosocial factors can contribute to its development.

Objectives: The objective is to determine the prevalence and to identify risk factors of LBP among nurses working in Addis Ababa City Public Hospitals, Ethiopia, in the year 2015.

Settings: Addis Ababa University, Black-Lion ('Tikur Anbessa') Hospital-BLH, is the country's highest tertiary level referral and teaching hospital. The three departments in connection with this study: Radiology, Pathology and Orthopedics, run undergraduate and residency programs and receive referred patients from all over the country.

Methods: A cross-sectional study with internal comparison was conducted throughout the period October-December, 2015. Sample was chosen by simple random sampling technique by taking the lists of nurses from Human Resource Department as a sampling frame. A well-structured, pre-tested and self-administered questionnaire was used to collect quantifiable information. The questionnaire included socio-demographic, back pain features, consequences of back pain, work-related and psychosocial factors. The collected data was entered in to Epi Info version 3.5.4 and was analyzed by SPSS. A probability level of 0.05 or less and 95% confidence level was used to indicate statistical significance. Ethical clearance was obtained from all respected administrative bodies, Hospitals and study participants.

Results: The study included 395 nurses and gave a response rate of 91.9%. The mean age was 30.6 (± 8.4) years. Majority of the respondents were female (285, 72.2%). Nearly half of the participants ($n=181$, 45.8% (95% CI (40.8%- 50.6%))) were complained of low back pain. There were statistical significant association between low back pain and working shift, physical activities at work; sleep disturbance and felt little pleasure by doing things.

Conclusion: A high prevalence of low back pain was found among nurses working in Addis Ababa Public Hospitals. Recognition & preventive measures like providing resting periods should be taken to reduce the risk of low back pain in nurses working in public hospitals.

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